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CHARMIDES AND OTHER POEMS

OSCAR WILDE

SECOND EDITION

METHUEN & CO. LTD. 36 ESSEX STREET W.C. LONDON

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Welde's Poems, a selection of which is given in this volume, were first published in volume form in 1881, and were reprinted four times before the end of 1882. A new Edition with additional poems, including Ravenna, The Sphinz, and The Ballad of Reading Gool, was first published (immted sissues on head-made paper and Japanese vellum) by dethuen & Co. in March, 1908. A further Edition (making the seventh) with some omissions from the issue of 1908, but including two new poems, was published in September, 1909. Eighth Edition, November, 1900. Ninth Edition, December, 1900. Tenth Edition, December, 1912. Twelfth Edition, May, 1913.

A further selection of the poems, including The Ballad of Reading Gaol, is published uniform with this volume.

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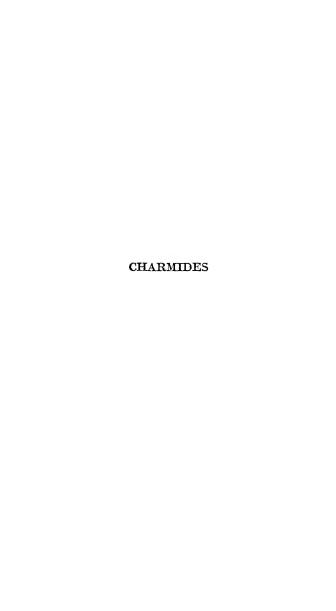
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CHARMIDES

1

HE was a Grecian lad, who coming home
With pulpy figs and wine from Sicily
Stood at his galley's prow, and let the foam
Blow through his crisp brown curls unconsciously,

And holding wave and wind in boy's despite Peered from his dripping seat across the wet and stormy night.

Till with the dawn he saw a burnished spear
Like a thin thread of gold against the sky,
And hoisted sail, and strained the creaking gear,
And bade the pilot head her lustily
Against the nor'west gale, and all day long
Held on his way, and marked the rowers' time
with measured song.

10 POEMS

- And when the faint Corinthian hills were red Dropped anchor in a little sandy bay,
- And with fresh boughs of olive crowned his head,
 And brushed from cheek and throat the hoary
 spray,
- And washed his limbs with oil, and from the hold
- Brought out his linen tunic and his sandals brazen-soled,

And a rich robe stained with the fishers' juice

Which of some swarthy trader he had bought

Upon the sunny quay at Syracuse,

And was with Tyrian broideries inwrought,

And by the questioning merchants made his way

Up through the soft and silver woods, and when

the labouring day

Had spun its tangled web of crimson cloud,

Clomb the high hill, and with swift silent feet

Crept to the fane unnoticed by the crowd

Of busy priests, and from some dark retreat

Watched the young swains his frolic playmates

bring

The firstling of their little flock, and the shy shepherd fling

The crackling salt upon the flame, or hang

His studded crook against the temple wall

To Her who keeps away the ravenous fang

Of the base wolf from homestead and from stall;

And then the clear-voiced maidens 'gan to sing,

And to the altar each man brought some goodly

offering,

A beechen cup brimming with milky foam,

A fair cloth wrought with cunning imagery
Of hounds in chase, a waxen honey-comb

Dripping with oozy gold which scarce the
bee

Had ceased from building, a black skin of oil

Meet for the wrestlers, a great boar the fierce and
white-tusked spoil

Stolen from Artemis that jealous maid

To please Athena, and the dappled hide

Of a tall stag who in some mountain glade

Had met the shaft; and then the herald cried,

And from the pillared precinct one by one

Went the glad Greeks well pleased that they their simple vows had done.

And the old priest put out the waning fires

Save that one lamp whose restless ruby glowed

For ever in the cell, and the shrill lyres

Came fainter on the wind, as down the road

In joyous dance these country folk did pass,

And with stout hands the warder closed the gates

of polished brass.

Long time he lay and hardly dared to breathe,

And heard the cadenced drip of spilt-out wine,

And the rose-petals falling from the wreath

As the night breezes wandered through the shrine,

And seemed to be in some entranced swoon

Till through the open roof above the full and
brimming moon

POEMS

Flooded with sheeny waves the marble floor,

When from his nook up leapt the venturous lad,

And flinging wide the cedar-carven door

Beheld an awful image saffron-clad

And armed for battle! the gaunt Griffin glared

From the huge helm, and the long lance of wreck

and ruin flared

Like a red rod of flame, stony and steeled

The Gorgon's head its leaden eyeballs relled,

And writhed its snaky horrors through the shield,

And gaped aghast with bloodless lips and cold

In passion impotent, while with blind gaze

The blinking owl between the feet hooted in shrill

amaze.

The lonely fisher as he trimmed his lamp

Far out at sea off Sunium, or cast

The net for tunnies, heard a brazen tramp

Of horses smite the waves, and a wild blast

Divide the folded curtains of the night,

And knelt upon the little poop, and prayed in
holy fright.

And guilty lovers in their venery

Forgat a little while their stolen sweets,

Deeming they heard dread Dian's bitter cry;

And the grim watchmen on their lofty
seats

Ran to their shields in haste precipitate,
Or strained black-bearded throats across the dusky
parapet.

POEMS

For round the temple rolled the clang of arms,

And the twelve Gods leapt up in marble
fear,

And the air quaked with dissonant alarums

Till huge Poseidon shook his mighty spear,

And on the frieze the prancing horses neighed,

And the low tread of hurrying feet rang from the

cavalcade.

Ready for death with parted lips he stood,

And well content at such a price to see

That calm wide brow, that terrible maidenhood,

The marvel of that pitiless chastity,

Ah! well content indeed, for never wight

Since Troy's young shepherd prince had seen so

wonderful a sight.

Ready for death he stood, but lo! the air

Grew silent, and the horses ceased to neigh,

And off his brow he tossed the clustering

hair,

And from his limbs he threw the cloak away;

For whom would not such love make desperate?

And nigher came, and touched her throat, and

with hands violate

Undid the cuirass, and the crocus gown,

And bared the breasts of polished ivory,

Till from the waist the peplos falling down

Left visible the secret mystery

Which to no lover will Athena show,

The grand cool flanks, the crescent thighs, the bossy hills of snow.

Those who have never known a lover's sin

Let them not read my ditty, it will be
To their dull ears so musicless and thin

That they will have no joy of it, but ye
To whose wan cheeks now creeps the lingering
smile,

Ye who have learned who Eros is,—O listen yet awhile.

A little space he let his greedy eyes

Rest on the burnished image, till mere sight

Half swooned for surfeit of such luxuries,

And then his lips in hungering delight

Fed on her lips, and round the towered neck

He flung his arms, nor cared at all his passion's

will to check.

Never I ween did lover hold such tryst,

For all night long he murmured honeyed word,
And saw her sweet unravished limbs, and kissed

Her pale and argent body undisturbed,
And paddled with the polished throat, and pressed

His hot and beating heart upon her chill and icy

breast.

It was as if Numidian javelins

Pierced through and through his wild and whirling brain,

And his nerves thrilled like throbbing violins

In exquisite pulsation, and the pain

Was such sweet anguish that he never drew

His lips from hers till overhead the lark of warning flew.

20 POEMS

They who have never seen the daylight peer
Into a darkened room, and drawn the curtain,
And with dull eyes and wearied from some dear
And worshipped body risen, they for certain
Will never know of what I try to sing,
How long the last kiss was, how fond and late
his lingering.

The moon was girdled with a crystal rim,

The sign which shipmen say is ominous

Of wrath in heaven, the wan stars were dim,

And the low lightening east was tremulous

With the faint fluttering wings of flying dawn,

Ere from the silent sombre shrine his lover had withdrawn.

Down the steep rock with hurried feet and fast Clomb the brave lad, and reached the cave of Pan,

And heard the goat-foot snoring as he passed,

And leapt upon a grassy knoll and ran

Like a young fawn unto an olive wood

Which in a shady valley by the well-built city

stood

And sought a little stream, which well he knew,

For oftentimes with boyish careless shout

The green and crested grebe he would pursue,

Or snare in woven net the silver trout,

And down amid the startled reeds he lay

Panting in breathless sweet affright, and waited

for the day.

On the green bank he lay, and let one hand
Dip in the cool dark eddies listlessly,
And soon the breath of morning came and fanned
His hot flushed cheeks, or lifted wantonly
The tangled curls from off his forehead, while
He on the running water gazed with strange and
secret smile.

And soon the shepherd in rough woollen cloak

With his long crook undid the wattled cotes,

And from the stack a thin blue wreath of smoke

Curled through the air across the ripening

oats,

And on the hill the yellow house-dog bayed

As through the crisp and rustling fern the heavy
cattle strayed.

And when the light-foot mower went afield

Across the meadows laced with threaded

dew,

And the sheep bleated on the misty weald,

And from its nest the waking cornerake flew,

Some woodmen saw him lying by the stream

And marvelled much that any lad so beautiful'

could seem,

Nor deemed him born of mortals, and one said,

'It is young Hylas, that false runaway

Who with a Naiad now would make his bed

Forgetting Herakles,' but others, 'Nay,

It is Narcissus, his own paramour,

Those are the fond and crimson lips no womans can allure.

And when they nearer came a third one cried,

It is young Dionysos who has hid

His spear and fawnskin by the river side

Weary of hunting with the Bassarid,

And wise indeed were we away to fly:

They live not long who on the gods immortal come to spy.'

So turned they back, and feared to look behind,
And told the timid swain how they had seen
Amid the reeds some woodland god reclined,
And no man dared to cross the open green,
And on that day no olive-tree was slain,
Nor rushes cut, but all deserted was the fair
domain,

Save when the neat-herd's lad, his empty pail
Well slung upon his back, with leap and bound
Raced on the other side, and stopped to hail,
Hoping that he some comrade new had found,
And gat no answer, and then half afraid
Passed on his simple way, or down the still and
silent glade

A little girl ran laughing from the farm,

Not thinking of love's secret mysteries,

And when she saw the white and gleaming arm

And all his manlihood, with longing eyes

Whose passion mocked her sweet virginity

Watched him awhile, and then stole back sadly
and wearily.

Far off he heard the city's hum and noise,

And now and then the shriller laughter where

The passionate purity of brown-limbed boys

Wrestled or raced in the clear healthful air,

And now and then a little tinkling bell

As the shorn wether led the sheep down to the mossy well.

Through the grey willows danced the fretful gnat,

The grasshopper chirped idly from the tree,

In sleek and oily coat the water-rat

Breasting the little ripples manfully

Made for the wild-duck's nest, from bough to

bough

Hopped the shy finch, and the huge tortoise crept across the slough.

On the faint wind floated the silky seeds

As the bright scythe swept through the waving

The ouzel-cock splashed circles in the reeds

And flecked with silver whorls the forest's glass,
Which scarce had caught again its imagery

Ere from its bed the dusky tench leapt at the
dragon-fly.

But little care had he for any thing

Though up and down the beech the squirrel
played,

And from the copse the linnet 'gan to sing

To its brown mate its sweetest serenade;

Ah! little care indeed, for he had seen

The breasts of Pallas and the naked wonder of the Queen.

seemed to bode

But when the herdsman called his straggling goats

With whistling pipe across the rocky road,

And the shard-beetle with its trumpet-notes

Boomed through the darkening woods, and

Of coming storm, and the belated crane

Passed homeward like a shadow, and the dull big

drops of rain

Fell on the pattering fig-leaves, up he rose,

And from the gloomy forest went his way

Past sombre homestead and wet orchard-close,

And came at last unto a little quay,

And called his mates aboard, and took his seat

On the high poop, and pushed from land, and

loosed the dripping sheet,

And steered across the bay, and when nine suns
Passed down the long and laddered way of gold,
And nine pale moons had breathed their orisons
To the chaste stars their confessors, or told
Their dearest secret to the downy moth
That will not fly at noonday, through the foam
and surging froth

Came a great owl with yellow sulphurous eyes

And lit upon the ship, whose timbers creaked

As though the lading of three argosies

Were in the hold, and flapped its wings and shrieked.

And darkness straightway stole across the deep, Sheathed was Orion's sword, dread Mars himself fled down the steep, And the moon hid behind a tawny mask

Of drifting cloud, and from the ocean's marge
Rose the red plume, the huge and hornèd casque,
The seven-cubit spear, the brazen targe!

And clad in bright and burnished panoply

Athena strode across the stretch of sick and
shivering sea!

To the dull sailors' sight her loosened locks

Seemed like the jagged storm-rack, and her feet
Only the spume that floats on hidden rocks,

And, marking how the rising waters beat
Against the rolling ship, the pilot cried
To the young helmsman at the stern to luff to

windward side

But he, the overbold adulterer,

A dear profaner of great mysteries,

An ardent amorous idolater,

When he beheld those grand relentless eyes

Laughed loud for joy, and crying out 'I come'

Leapt from the lofty poop into the chill and churning foam.

Then fell from the high heaven one bright star,

One dancer left the circling galaxy,

And back to Athens on her clattering car

In all the pride of venged divinity

Pale Pallas swept with shrill and steely clank,

And a few gurgling bubbles rose where her boy

lover sank.

And the mast shuddered as the gaunt owl flew

With mocking hoots after the wrathful Queen,

And the old pilot bade the trembling crew

Hoist the big sail, and teld how he had seen

Close to the stern a dim and giant form,

And like a dipping swallow the stout ship dashed

through the storm.

And no man dared to speak of Charmides

Deeming that he some evil thing had wrought,

And when they reached the strait Symplegades

They beached their galley on the shore, and sought

The toll-gate of the city hastily,

And in the market showed their brown and pictured pottery. II

BUT some good Triton-god had ruth, and bare

The boy's drowned body back to Grecian land, And mermaids combed his dank and dripping hair And smoothed his brow, and loosed his clenching hand;

Some brought sweet spices from far Araby, And others bade the halcyon sing her softest lullaby.

And when he neared his old Athenian home,

A mighty billow rose up suddenly
Upon whose oily back the clotted foam
Lay diapered in some strange fantasy,
And clasping him unto its glassy breast
Swept landward, like a white-maned steed upon
a venturous quest!

Now where Colonos leans unto the sea

There lies a long and level stretch of lawn;

The rabbit knows it, and the mountain bee

For it deserts Hymettus, and the Faun

Is not afraid, for never through the day

Comes a cry ruder than the shout of shepherd

lads at play.

But often from the thorny labyrinth

And tangled branches of the circling wood

The stealthy hunter sees young Hyacinth

Hurling the polished disk, and draws his hood

Over his guilty gaze, and creeps away,

Nor dares to wind his horn, or—else at the first

break of day

The Dryads come and throw the leathern ball
Along the reedy shore, and circumvent
Some goat-eared Pan to be their seneschal
For fear of bold Poseidon's ravishment,
And loose their girdles, with shy timorous eyes,
Lest from the surf his azure arms and purple
beard should rise.

On this side and on that a rocky cave,

Hung with the yellow-belled laburnum, stands

Smooth is the beach, save where some ebbing

wave

Leaves its faint outline etched upon the sands,
As though it feared to be too soon forgot
By the green rush, its playfellow,—and yet, it is
a spot

So small, that the inconstant butterfly

Could steal the hoarded money from each
flower

Ere it was noon, and still not satisfy

Its over-greedy love,—within an hour

A sailor boy, were he but rude enow

To land and pluck a garland for his galley's painted

prow,

Would almost leave the little meadow bare,

For it knows nothing of great pageantry,
Only a few narcissi here and there

Stand separate in sweet austerity,
Dotting the unmown grass with silver stars,
And here and there a daffodil waves tiny
scimitars.

Hither the billow brought him, and was glad

Of such dear servitude, and where the land

Was virgin of all waters laid the lad

Upon the golden margent of the strand,

And like a lingering lover oft returned

To kiss those pallid limbs which once with intense fire burned,

Ere the wet seas had quenched that holocaust,

That self-fed flame, that passionate lustihead,

Ere grisly death with chill and nipping frost

Had withered up those lilies white and red

Which, while the boy would through the forest range,

Answered each other in a sweet antiphonal counterchange. And when at dawn the wood-nymphs, hand-inhand,

Threaded the bosky dell, their satyr spied

The boy's pale body stretched upon the sand,

And feared Poseidon's treachery, and cried,

And like bright sunbeams flitting through a glade

Each startled Dryad sought some safe and leafy

ambuscade.

Save one white girl, who deemed it would not be
So dread a thing to feel a sea-god's arms
Crushing her breasts in amorous tyranny,
And longed to listen to those subtle charms
Insidious lovers weave when they would win
Some fenced fortress, and stole back again, nor
thought it sin

To yield her treasure unto one so fair,

And lay beside him, thirsty with love's drouth,

Called him soft names, played with his tangled

hair,

And with hot lips made havoc of his mouth

Afraid he might not wake, and then afraid

Lest he might wake too soon, fled back, and then,

fond renegade,

Returned to fresh assault, and all day long
Sat at his side, and laughed at her new toy,
And held his hand, and sang her sweetest song,
Then frowned to see how froward was the boy
Who would not with her maidenhood entwine,
Nor knew that three days since his eyes had
looked on Proserpine;

Nor knew what sacrilege his lips had done,

But said, 'He will awake, I know him well,

He will awake at evening when the sun

Hangs his red shield on Corinth's citadel;

This sleep is but a cruel treachery

To make me love him more, and in some cavern

of the sea

Deeper than ever falls the fisher's line

Already a huge Triton blows his horn,

And weaves a garland from the crystalline

And drifting ocean-tendrils to adorn

The emerald pillars of our bridal bed,

For sphered in foaming silver, and with coral crowned head,

CHARMIDES

We two will sit upon a throne of pearl,

And a blue wave will be our canopy,

And at our feet the water-snakes will curl

In all their amethystine panoply

Of diamonded mail, and we will mark

The mullets swimming by the mast of some stormfoundered bark,

Vermilion-finned with eyes of bossy gold

Like flakes of crimson light, and the great
deep

His glassy-portaled chamber will unfold,

And we will see the painted dolphins sleep

Cradled by murmuring halcyons on the rocks

Where Proteus in quaint suit of green pastures

his monstrous flocks.

And tremulous opal-hued anemones

Will wave their purple fringes where we tread

Upon the mirrored floor, and argosies

Of fishes flecked with tawny scales will thread

The drifting cordage of the shattered wreck,

And honey-coloured amber beads our twining

limbs will deck.'

But when that baffled Lord of War the Sun

With gaudy pennon flying passed away

Into his brazen House, and one by one

The little yellow stars began to stray

Across the field of heaven, ah! then indeed

She feared his lips upon her lips would never care
to feed,

And cried, 'Awake, already the pale moon

Washes the trees with silver, and the wave

Creeps grey and chilly up this sandy dune,

The croaking frogs are out, and from the cave

The nightjar shrieks, the fluttering bats repass,

And the brown stoat with hollow flanks creeps

through the dusky grass.

Nay, though thou art a god, be not so coy,

For in you stream there is a little reed

That often whispers how a lovely boy

Lay with her once upon a grassy mead,

Who when his cruel pleasure he had done

Spread wings of rustling gold and soared aloft into
the sun.

Be not so coy, the laurel trembles still

With great Apollo's kisses, and the fir

Whose clustering sisters fringe the seaward hill

Hath many a tale of that bold rawisher

Whom men call Boreas, and I have seen

The mocking eyes of Hermes through the poplar's silvery sheen.

Even the jealous Naiads call me fair,

And every morn a young and ruddy swain

Woos me with apples and with locks of hair,

And seeks to soothe my virginal disdain

By all the gifts the gentle wood-nymphs love;

But yesterday he brought to me an iris-plumaged

dove

With little crimson feet, which with its store

Of seven spotted eggs the cruel lad

Had stolen from the lofty sycamore

At daybreak, when her amorous comrade had

Flown off in search of berried juniper

Which most they love; the fretful wasp, that
earliest vintager

Of the blue grapes, hath not persistency
So constant as this simple shepherd-boy
For my poor lips, his joyous purity
And laughing sunny eyes might well decoy
A Dryad from her oath to Artemis;
For very beautiful is he, his mouth was made to

His argent forehead, like a rising moon

Over the dusky hills of meeting brows,

Is crescent shaped, the hot and Tyrian noon

Leads from the myrtle-grove no goodlier spouse

For Cytheræa, the first silky down

Fringes his blushing cheeks, and his young limbs

are strong and brown;

And he is rich, and fat and fleecy herds

Of bleating sheep upon his meadows lie,

And many an earthen bowl of yellow curds

Is in his homestead for the thievish fly

To swim and drown in, the pink clover mead

Keeps its sweet store for him, and he can pipe
on oaten reed.

And yet I love him not; it was for thee
I kept my love; I knew that thou would'st

come

To rid me of this pallid chastity,

Thou fairest flower of the flowerless foam

Of all the wide Ægean, brightest star

Of ocean's azure heavens where the mirrored planets are!

I knew that thou would'st come, for when at first
The dry wood burgeoned, and the sap of spring
Swelled in my green and tender bark or burst
To myriad multitudinous blossoming
Which mocked the midnight with its mimic moons
That did not dread the dawn, and first the
thrushes' rapturous tunes

Startled the squirrel from its granary,

And cuckoo flowers fringed the narrow lane,

Through my young leaves a sensuous ecstasy

Crept like new wine, and every mossy vein

Throbbed with the fitful pulse of amorous blood,

And the wild winds of passion shook my slim

stem's maidenhood.

The trooping fawns at evening came and laid

Their cool black noses on my lowest boughs,

And on my topmost branch the blackbird made

A little nest of grasses for his spouse,

And now and then a twittering wren would light

On a thin twig which hardly bare the weight of such delight.

I was the Attic shepherd's trysting place,

Beneath my shadow Amaryllis lay,

And round my trunk would laughing Daphnis

chase

The timorous girl, till tired out with play

She felt his hot breath stir her tangled hair,

And turned, and looked, and fled no more from

such delightful snare.

Then come away unto my ambuscade

Where clustering woodbine weaves a canopy

For amorous pleasaunce, and the rustling shade

Of Paphian myrtles seems to sanctify

The dearest rites of love; there in the cool

And green recesses of its farthest depth there is
a pool,

The ouzel's haunt, the wild bee's pasturage,

For round its rim great creamy lilies float

Through their flat leaves in verdant anchorage,

Each cup a white-sailed golden-laden boat

Steered by a dragon-fly,—be not afraid

To leave this wan and wave-kissed shore, surely

the place was made

For lovers such as we; the Cyprian Queen,

One arm around her boyish paramour,

Strays often there at eve, and I have seen

The moon strip off her misty vestiture

For young Endymion's eyes; be not afraid,

The panther feet of Dian never tread that secret glade.

Nay if thou will'st, back to the beating brine,

Back to the boisterous billow let us go,

And walk all day beneath the hyaline

Huge vault of Neptune's watery portico,

And watch the purple monsters of the deep

Sport in ungainly play, and from his lair keen

Xiphias leap.

For if my mistress find me lying here

She will not ruth or gentle pity show,

But lay her boar-spear down, and with austere

Relentless fingers string the cornel bow,

And draw the feathered notch against her breast,

And loose the archèd cord; aye, even now upon

the quest

I hear her hurrying feet,—awake, awake,

Thou laggard in love's battle! once at least

Let me drink deep of passion's wine, and slake

My parchèd being with the nectarous feast

Which even gods affect! O come, Love, come,

Still we have time to reach the cavern of thine

azure home.

Scarce had she spoken when the shuddering trees
Shook, and the leaves divided, and the air
Grew conscious of a god, and the grey seas
Crawled backward, and a long and dismal blare
Blew from some tasselled horn, a sleuth-hound
bayed,

And like a flame a barbèd reed flew whizzing down the glade.

And where the little flowers of her breast

Just brake into their milky blossoming,

This murderous paramour, this unbidden guest,

Pierced and struck deep in horrid chambering,

And ploughed a bloody furrow with its dart,

And dug a long red road, and cleft with wingèd

death her heart.

Sobbing her life out with a bitter cry

On the boy's body fell the Dryad maid,

Sobbing for incomplete virginity,

And raptures unenjoyed, and pleasures dead,

And all the pain of things unsatisfied,

And the bright drops of crimson youth crept down

her throbbing side.

Ah! pitiful it was to hear her moan,

And very pitiful to see her die

Ere she had yielded up her sweets, or known

The joy of passion, that dread mystery

Which not to know is not to live at all,

And yet to know is to be held in death's most deadly thrall.

But as it hapt the Queen of Cythere,

Who with Adonis all night long had lain

Within some shepherd's hut in Arcady,

On team of silver doves and gilded wain

Was journeying Paphos-ward, high up afar

From mortal ken between the mountains and the morning star,

And when low down she spied the hapless pair,

And heard the Oread's faint despairing cry,

Whose cadence seemed to play upon the air

As though if were a viol, hastily

She bade her pigeons fold each straining plume,

And dropt to earth, and reached the strand, and

saw their dolorous doom.

For as a gardener turning back his head

To catch the last notes of the linnet, mows

With careless scythe too near some flower bed,

And cuts the thorny pillar of the rose,

And with the flower's loosened loveliness

Strews the brown mould; or as some shepherd

lad in wantonness

Driving his little flock along the mead

Treads down two daffodils, which side by side

Have lured the lady-bird with yellow brede

And made the gaudy moth forget its pride,

Treads down their brimming golden chalices

Under light feet which were not made for such rude ravages;

Or as a schoolboy tired of his book

Flings himself down upon the reedy grass

And plucks two water-lilies from the brook,

And for a time forgets the hour glass,

Then wearies of their sweets, and goes his way,

And lets the hot sun kill them, even so these

lovers lay.

And Venus cried, 'It is dread Artemis

Whose bitter hand hath wrought this cruekty,
Or else that mightier maid whose care it is

To guard her strong and stainless majesty'
Upon the hill Athenian,—alas!
That they who loved so well unloved into Death's house should pass.'

So with soft hands she laid the boy and girl
In the great golden waggon tenderly
(Her white throat whiter than a moony pearl
Just threaded with a blue vein's tapestry
Had not yet ceased to throb, and still her breast
Swayed like a wind-stirred lily in ambiguous
unrest)

And then each pigeon spread its milky van,

The bright car soared into the dawning sky,

And like a cloud the aerial caravan

Passed over the Ægean silently,

Till the faint air was troubled with the song

From the wan mouths that call on bleeding

Thammuz all night long.

But when the doves had reached their wonted

Where the wide stair of orbèd marble dips
Its snows into the sea, her fluttering soul
Just shook the trembling petals of her lips
And passed into the void, and Venus knew
That one fair maid the less would walk amid her
retinue,

And bade her servants carve a cedar chest

With all the wonder of this history,

Within whose scented womb their limbs should

rest

Where olive-trees make tender the blue sky
On the low hills of Paphos, and the Faun
Pipes in the noonday, and the nightingale sings
on till dawn.

Nor failed they to obey her hest, and ere

The morning bee had stung the daffodil

With tiny fretful spear, or from its lair

The waking stag had leapt across the rill

And roused the ouzel, or the lizard crept

Athwart the sunny rock, beneath the grass their

bodies slept.

And when day brake, within that silver shrine

Fed by the flames of cressets tremulous,

Queen Venus knelt and prayed to Proserpine

That she whose beauty made Death amorous

Should beg a guerdon from her pallid Lord,

And let Desire pass across dread Charon's icy ford.

III

In melancholy moonless Acheron,

Far from the goodly earth and joyous day

Where no spring ever buds, nor ripening sun

Weighs down the apple trees, nor flowery May

Chequers with chestnut blooms the grassy floor,

Where thrushes never sing, and piping linnets

mate no more,

There by a dim and dark Lethæan well
Young Charmides was lying; wearily
He plucked the blossoms from the asphodel,
And with its little rifled treasury
Strewed the dull waters of the dusky stream,
And watched the white stars founder, and the
land was like a dream,

When as he gazed into the watery glass

And through his brown hair's curly tangles
scanned

His own wan face, a shadow seemed to pass

Across the mirror, and a little hand

Stole into his, and warm lips timidly

Brushed his pale cheeks, and breathed their secret

forth into a sigh.

Then turned he round his weary eyes and saw,

And ever nigher still their faces came,

And nigher ever did their young mouths draw

Until they seemed one perfect rose of flame,

And longing arms around her neck he cast,

And felt her throbbing bosom, and his breath

came hot and fast,

And all his hoarded sweets were hers to kiss,

And all her maidenhood was his to slay,

And limb to simb in long and rapturous bliss

Their passion waxed and waned,—O why essay

To pipe again of love, too venturous reed!

Enough, enough that Eros laughed upon that
flowerless mead.

Too venturous poesy, O why essay

To pipe again of passion! fold thy wings
O'er daring Icarus and bid thy lay
Sleep hidden in the lyre's silent strings
Till thou hast found the old Castalian rill,
Or from the Lesbian waters plucked drowned
Sappho's golden quill!

Enough, enough that he whose life had been

A fiery pulse of sin, a splendid shame,

Could in the loveless land of Hades glean

One scorching harvest from those fields of flame

Where passion walks with naked unshod feet

And is not wounded,—ah! enough that once their

lips could meet

In that wild throb when all existences

Seemed narrowed to one single ecstasy

Which dies through its own sweetness and the

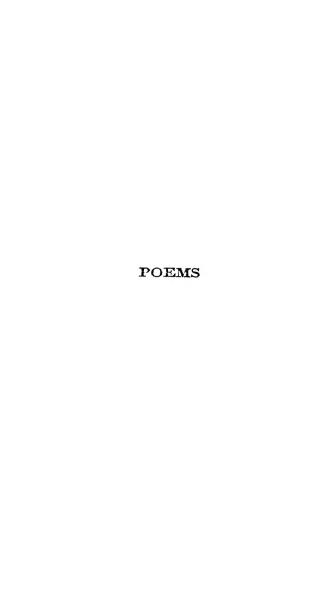
stress

Of too much pleasure, ere Persephone

Had bade them serve her by the ebon throne

Of the pale God who in the fields of Enna loosed

her zone.



REQUIESCAT

TREAD lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow, She hardly knew She was a woman, so Sweetly she grew. Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone,
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.

AVIGNON

SAN MINIATO

SEE, I have climbed the mountain side
Up to this holy house of God,
Where once that Angel-Painter trod
Who saw the heavens opened wide,

And throned upon the crescent moon

The Virginal white Queen of Grace,—
Mary! could I but see thy face

Death could not come at all too soon.

O crowned by God with thorns and pain!

Mother of Christ! O mystic wife!

My heart is weary of this life

And over-sad to sing again.

O crowned by God with love and flame!
O crowned by Christ the Holy Oned
O listen ere the searching sun
Show to the world my sin and shame.

ROME UNVISITED

1

THE corn has turned from grey to red,
Since first my spirit wandered forth
From the drear cities of the north,
And to Italia's mountains fied.

And here I set my face towards home,

For all my pilgrimage is done,

Although, methinks, yon blood-red sun

Marshals the way to Holy Rome.

O Blessed Lady, who dost hold
Upon the seven hills thy reign!
O Mother without blot or stain,
Crowned with bright crowns of triple gold!

O Roma, Roma, at thy feet
I lay this barren gift of song!
For, ah! the way is steep and long
That leads unto thy sacred street.

п

AND yet, what joy it were for me
To turn my feet unto the south,
And journeying towards the Tiber mouth
To kneel again at Fiesole!

And wandering through the tangled pines
That break the gold of Arno's stream,
To see the purple mist and gleam
Of morning on the Apennines

By many a vineyard-hidden home, Orchard and olive-garden grey, Till from the drear Campagna's way The seven hills bear up the dome!

TTT

A PILGRIM from the northern seas—
What joy for me to seek alone
The wondrous temple and the throne
Of him who holds the awful keys!

When, bright with purple and with gold Come priest and holy cardinal, And borne above the heads of all The gentle Shepherd of the Fold.

O joy to see before I die

The only God-anointed king,

And hear the silver trumpets ring

A triumph as he passes by!

Or at the brazen-pillared shrine

Holds high the mystic sacrifice,

And shows his God to human eyes

Beneath the veil of bread and wine.

IV

FOR lo, what changes time can bring!

The cycles of revolving years

May free my heart from all its fears,

And teach my lips a song to sing.

Before you field of trembling gold

Is garnered into dusty sheaves,

Or ere the autumn's scarlet leaves
Flutter as birds adown the wold,

I may have run the glorious race,
And caught the torch while yet aflame,
And called upon the holy name
Of Him who now doth hide His face.

ARONA

HUMANITAD

IT is full winter now: the trees are bare,
Save where the cattle huddle from the cold
Beneath the pine, for it doth never wear
The autumn's gaudy livery whose gold
Her jealous brother pilfers, but is true
To the green doublet; bitter is the wind, as
though it blew

From Saturn's cave; a few thin wisps of hay
Lie on the sharp black hedges, where the wain
Dragged the sweet pillage of a summer's day
From the low meadows up the narrow lane;
Upon the half-thawed snow the bleating sheep
Press close against the hurdles, and the shivering
house-dogs creep

From the shut stable to the frozen stream

And back again disconsolate, and miss

The bawling shepherds and the noisy team;

And overhead in circling listlessness

The cawing rooks whirl round the frosted stack,

Or crowd the dripping boughs; and in the fen

the ice-pools crack

Where the gaunt bittern stalks among the reeds

And flaps his wings, and stretches back his

neck,

And hoots to see the moon; across the meads

Limps the poor frightened hare, a little speck;

And a stray seamew with its fretful cry

Flits like a sudden drift of snow against the dull
grey sky.

Full winter: and the lusty goodman brings

His load of faggots from the chilly byre,

And stamps his feet upon the hearth, and flings

The sappy billets on the waning fire,

And laughs to see the sudden lightening scare

His children at their play, and yet,—the spring

is in the air;

Already the slim crocus stirs the snow,

And soon you blanched fields will bloom
again

With nodding cowslips for some lad to mow,
For with the first warm kisses of the rain

The winter's icy sorrow breaks to tears,

And the brown thrushes mate, and with bright eyes the rabbit peers

80 POEMS

From the dark warren where the fir-cones lie,

And treads one snowdrop under foot, and
runs

Over the mossy knoll, and blackbifds fly

Across our path at evening, and the suns

Stay longer with us; ah! how good to see

Grass-girdled spring in all her joy of laughing

greenery

Dance through the hedges till the early rose,

(That sweet repentance of the thorny briar!)

Burst from its sheathed emerald and disclose

The little quivering disk of golden fire

Which the bees know so well, for with it come

Pale boy's-love, sops-in-wine, and daffadillies all in bloom.

Then up and down the field the sower goes,

While close behind the laughing younker scares.

With shrilly-whoop the black and thievish crows,

And then the chestnut-tree its glory wears,

And on the grass the creamy blossom falls

In odorous excess, and faint half-whispered madrigals

Steal from the bluebells' nodding carillons

Each breezy morn, and then white jessamine,

That star of its own heaven, snap-dragons

With lolling crimson tongues, and eglantine

In dusty velvets clad usurp the bed

And woodland empery, and when the lingering rose hath shed

Red leaf by leaf its folded panoply,

And pansies closed their purple-lidded eyes,

Chrysanthemums from gilded argosy

Unload their gaudy scentless merchandise,

And violets getting overbold withdraw

From their shy nooks, and scarlet berries dot the

leafless haw.

O happy field! and O thrice happy tree!

Soon will your queen in daisy-flowered smock

And crown of flower-de-luce trip down the lea,

Soon will the lazy shepherds drive their

flock

Back to the pasture by the pool, and soon

Through the green leaves will float the hum of
murmuring bees at noon.

Soon will the glade be bright with bellamour,

The flower which wantons love, and those sweet

nuns

Vale-lilies in their snowy vestiture

Will tell their beaded pearls, and carnations

With mitred dusky leaves will scent the wind,

And straggling traveller's-joy each hedge with
yellow stars will bind.

Dear bride of Nature and most bounteous spring,

That canst give increase to the sweet-breath'd

kine,

And to the kid its little horns, and bring

The soft and silky blossoms to the vine,

Where is that old nepenthe which of yore

Man got from poppy root and glossy-berried

mandragore!

There was a time when any common bird

Could make me sing in unison, a time

When all the strings of boyish life were stirred

To quick response or more melodious rhyme

By every forest idyll;—do I change?

Or rather doth some evil thing through thy fair

pleasaunce range?

Nay, nay, thou art the same: 'tis I who seek

To vex with sighs thy simple solitude,

And because fruitless tears bedew my cheek

Would have thee weep with me in brotherhood;

Fool! shall each wronged and restless spirit

dare

To taint such wine with the salt poison of his own despair! Thou art the same: 'tis I whose wretched soul

Takes discontent to be its paramour,

And gives its kingdom to the rude control

Of what should be its servitor,—for sure

Wisdom is somewhere, though the stormy sea

Contain it not, and the huge deep answer 'Tis

not in me.'

To burn with one clear flame, to stand erect
In natural honour, not to bend the knee
In profitless prostrations whose effect
Is by itself condemned, what alchemy
Can teach me this? what herb Medea brewed
Will bring the unexultant peace of essence not subdued?

The minor chord which ends the harmony,

And for its answering brother waits in vain
Sobbing for incompleted melody,

Dies a swan's death; but I the Keir of pain,

A silent Memnon with blank lidless eyes,

Wait for the light and music of those suns which
never rise.

The quenched-out torch, the lonely cypress-gloom,

The little dust stored in the narrow urn,

The gentle XAIPE of the Attic tomb,—

Were not these better far than to return

To my old fitful restless malady,

Or spend my days within the voiceless cave of

misery?

Nay! for perchance that poppy-crowned god
Is like the watcher by a sick man's bed
Who talks of sleep but gives it not; his rod
Hath lost its virtue, and, when all is said,
Death is too rude, too obvious a key
To solve one single secret in a life's philosophy.

And Love! that noble madness, whose august
And inextinguishable might can slay
The soul with honeyed drugs,—alas! I must
From such sweet ruin play the runaway,
Although too constant memory never can
Forget the archèd splendour of those brows
Olympian

Which for a little season made my youth

So soft a swoon of exquisite indolence

That all the chiding of more prudent Truth

Seemed the thin voice of jealousy,—O hence

Thou huntress deadlier than Artemis!

Go seek some other quarry! for of thy too perilous

bliss

My lips have drunk enough,—no more, no more,—

Though Love himself should turn his gilded prow

Back to the troubled waters of this shore

Where I am wrecked and stranded, even now

The chariot wheels of passion sweep too near,

Hence! Hence! I pass unto a life more barren,

more austere.

More barren—ay, those arms will never lean

Down through the trellised vines and draw my
soul

In sweet reluctance through the tangled green;

Some other head must wear that aureole,

For I am hers who loves not any man

Whose white and stainless bosom bears the sign

Gorgonian.

Let Venus go and chuck her dainty page,
And kiss his mouth, and toss his curly hair,
With net and spear and hunting equipage
Let young Adonis to his tryst repair,
But me her fond and subtle-fashioned spell
Delights no more, though I could win her dearest
citadel.

Ay, though I were that laughing shepherd boy
Who from Mount Ida saw the little cloud
Pass over Tenedos and lofty Troy

And knew the coming of the Queen, and bowed

In wonder at her feet, not for the sake

Of a new Helen would I bid her hand the apple
take.

Then rise supreme Athena argent-limbed!

And, if my lips be musicless, inspire

At least my life: was not thy glory hymned

By One who gave to thee his sword and lyre

Like Æschylos at well-fought Marathon,

And died to show that Milton's England still

could bear a son!

And live without desire, fear and pain,
Or nurture that wise calm which long ago
The grave Athenian master taught to men,
Self-poised, self-centred, and self-comforted,
To watch the world's vain phantasies go by with
unbowed head.

Alas! that serene brow, those eloquent lips,

Those eyes that mirrored all eternity,

Rest in their own Colonos, an eclipse

Hath come on Wisdom, and Mnemosyne

Is childless; in the night which she had made

For lofty secure flight Athena's owl itself hath

strayed.

Nor much with Science do I care to climb,

Although by strange and subtle witchery

She drew the moon from heaven: the Muse Time

Unrolls her gorgeous-coloured tap3stry

To no less eager eyes; often indeed

In the great epic of Polymnia's scroll I love to

read

How Asia sent her myriad hosts to war

Against a little town, and panoplied
In gilded mail with jewelled scimitar,

White-shielded, purple-crested, rode the Mede
Between the waving poplars and the sea

Which men call Artemisium, till he saw Thermopylæ

Its steep ravine spanned by a narrow wall,

And on the nearer side a little brood

Of carelesselions holding festival!

And stood amazed at such hardihood,

And pitched his tent upon the reedy shore,

And stayed two days to wonder, and then crept

at midnight o'er

Some unfrequented height, and coming down
The autumn forests treacherously slew
What Sparta held most dear and was the crown
Of far Eurotas, and passed on, nor knew
How God had staked an evil net for him
In the small bay at Salamis,—and yet, the page
grows dim,

Its cadenced Greek delights me not, I feel

With such a goodly time too out of tune

To love it much: for like the Dial's wheel

That from its blinded darkness strikes the

noon

Yet never sees the sun, so do my eyes

Restlessly follow that which from my cheated

vision flies.

O for one grand unselfish simple life

To teach us what is Wisdom! speak ye hills

Of lone Helvellyn, for this note of strife

Shunned your untroubled crags and crystal rills,

Where is that Spirit which living blamelessly

Yet dared to kiss the smitten mouth of his own

century!

Speak ye Rydalian laurels! where is he

Whose gentle head ye sheltered, that pure soul

Whose gracious days of uncrowned majesty

Through lowliest conduct touched the lofty goal

Where love and duty mingle! Him at least

The most high Laws were glad of, he had sat at

Wisdom's feast;

But we are Learning's changelings, know by rote

The clarion watchword of each Grecian school

And follow none, the flawless sword which smote

The pagan Hydra is an effect tool

Which we curselves have blunted, what man now

Shall scale the august ancient heights and to old

Reverence bow?

One such indeed I saw, but, Ichabod!

Gone is that last dear son of Italy,

Who being man died for the sake of God,

And whose unrisen bones sleep peacefully,

O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's tower,

Thou marble lily of the lily town! let not the

Of the rude tempest vex his slumber, or

The Arno with its tawny troubled gold
O'er-leap its marge, no mightier conqueror
Clomb the high Capitol in the days of old
When Rome was indeed Rome, for Liberty
Walked like a bride beside him, at which sight
pale Mystery

Fled shrieking to her farthest sombrest cell

With an old man who grabbled rusty keys,

Fled shuddering, for that immemorial knell

With which oblivion buries dynasties

Swept like a wounded eagle on the blast,

As to the holy heart of Rome the great triumvir passed.

He knew the holiest heart and heights of Rome,

He drave the base wolf from the lion's lair,

And now lies dead by that empyreal dome

Which overtops Valdarno hung in air

By Brunelleschi—O Melpomene

Breathe through thy melancholy pipe thy sweetest

threnody!

G

Breathe through the tragic stops such melodies

That Joy's self may grow jealous, and the Nine
Forget awhile their discreet emperies,

Mourning for him who on Rome's lordliest shrine

Lit for men's lives the light of Marathon,

And bare to sun-forgotten fields the fire of the

sun!

O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's tower!

Let some young Florentine each eventide

Bring coronals of that enchanted flower

Which the dim woods of Vallombrosa hide,

And deck the marble tomb wherein he lies

Whose soul is as some mighty orb unseen of

mortal eyes!

Some mighty orb whose cycled wanderings,

Being tempest-driven to the farthest rim

Where Chaos meets Creation and the wings

Of the eternal chanting Cherubim

Are pavilioned on Nothing, passed away

Into a moonless void,—and yet, though he is dust
and clay,

He is not dead, the immemorial Fates

Forbid it, and the closing shears refrain.

Lift up your heads ye everlasting gates!

Ye argent clarions, sound a loftier strain

For the vile thing he hated lurks within

Its sombre house, alone with God and memories

of sin.

Still what avails it that she sought her cave

That murderous mother of red harlotries?

At Munich on the marble architrave.

The Grecian boys die smiling, but the seas

Which wash Ægina fret in loneliness

Not mirroring their beauty; so our lives grow

colourless

For lack of our ideals, if one star

Flame torch-like in the heavens the unjust

Swift daylight kills it, and no trump of war

Can wake to passionate voice the silent dust

Which was Mazzini once! rich Niobe

For all her stony sorrows hath her sons; but

Italy,

What Easter Day shall make her children rise,
Who were not Gods yet suffered? what sure
feet

Shall find their grave-clothes folded? what clear eyes

Shall see them bodily? O it were meet

To roll the stone from off the sepulchre

And kiss the bleeding roses of their wounds, in
love of her,

Our Italy! our mother visible!

Most blessed among nations and most sad,

For whose dear sake the young Calabrian fell

That day at Aspromonte and was glad

That in an age when God was bought and sold

One man could die for Liberty! but we, burnt

out and cold,

See Honour smitten on the cheek and gyves

Bind the sweet feet of Mercy: Poverty

Creeps through our sunless lanes and with sharp

Cuts the warm throats of children stealthily,

And no word said:—O we are wretched men

Unworthy of our great inheritance! where is the

pen

Of austere Milton? where the mighty sword
Which slew its master righteously? the years
Have lost their ancient leader, and no word
Breaks from the voiceless tripod on our ears:
While as a ruined mother in some spasm
Bears a base child and loathes it, so our best
enthusiasm

Genders unlawful children, Anarchy
Freedom's own Judas, the vile prodigal
Licence who steals the gold of Liberty
And yet has nothing, Ignorance the real
One Fratricide since Cain, Envy the asp
That stings itself to anguish, Avarice whose palsied
grasp

Is in its extent stiffened, moneyed Greed

For whose dull appetite men waste away

Amid the whirr of wheels and are the seed

Of things which slay their sower, these each

day

Sees rife in England, and the gentle feet

Of Beauty tread no more the stones of each

unlovely street.

What even Cromwell spared is desecrated

By weed and worm, left to the stormy play
Of wind and beating snow, or renovated

By more destructful hands: Time's worst decay
Will wreathe its ruins with some loveliness,
But these new Vandals can but make a rain-proof
barrenness.

Where is that Art which bade the Angels sing
Through Lincoln's lofty choir, till the air
Seems from such marble harmonies to ring
With sweeter song than common lips can
dare

To draw from actual reed? ah! where is now

The cunning hand which made the flowering hawthorn branches bow

For Southwell's arch, and carved the House of One

Who loved the lilies of the field with all
Our dearest English flowers? the same sun
Rises for us: the seasons natural

Weave the same tapestry of green and grey:

The unchanged hills are with us: but that Spirit hath passed away.

And yet perchance it may be better so,

For Tyranny is an incestuous Queen,

Murder her brother is her bedfellow,

And the Plague chambers with her:

And the Plague chambers with her: in obscene

And bloody paths her treacherous feet are set; Better the empty desert and a soul inviolate! For gentle brotherhood, the harmony

Of living in the healthful air, the swift

Clean beauty of strong limbs when men are free

And women chaste, these are the things which

lift

Our souls up more than even Agnolo's

Gaunt blinded Sibyl poring o'er the scroll of
human woes,

Or Titian's little maiden on the stair

White as her own sweet lily and as tall,

Or Mona Lisa smiling through her hair,—

Ah! somehow life is bigger after all

Than any painted angel, could we see

The God that is within us! The old Greek serenity

Which curbs the passion of that level line
Of marble youths, who with untroubled eyes
And chastened limbs ride round Athena's shrine
And mirror her divine economies,
And balanced symmetry of what in man
Would else wage ceaseless warfare,—this at least
within the span

Between our mother's kisses and the grave

Might so inform our lives, that we could win

Such mighty empires that from her cave

Temptation would grow hoarse, and pallid

Sin

Would walk ashamed of his adulteries,

And Passion creep from out the House of Lust
with startled eyes.

To make the body and the spirit one

With all right things, till no thing live in

vain

From morn to noon, but in sweet unison

With every pulse of flesh and throb of brain

The soul in flawless essence high enthroned,

Against all outer vain attack invincibly bastioned,

Mark with serene impartiality

The strife of things, and yet be comforted,

Knowing that by the chain causality

All separate existences are wed

Into one supreme whole, whose utterance

Is joy, or holier praise! ah! surely this were
governance

Of Life in most august omnipresence,

Through which the rational intellect would find,

In passion its expression, and mere sense,
Ignoble else, lend fire to the mind,
And being joined with it in harmony
More mystical than that which binds the stars
planetary,

Strike from their several tones one octave chord

Whose cadence being measureless would fly

Through all the circling spheres, then to its Lord

Return refreshed with its new empery

And more exultant power,—this indeed

Could we but reach it were to find the last, the
perfect creed.

Ah! it was easy when the world was young

To keep one's life free and inviolate,

From our sad lips another song is rung,

By our own hands our heads are desecrate,

Wanderers in drear exile, and dispossessed

Of what should be our own, we can but feed on

wild unrest.

Somehow the grace, the bloom of things has flown,

And of all men we are most wretched who

Must live each other's lives and not our own

For very pity's sake and then undo

All that we lived for—it was otherwise

When soul and body seemed to blend in mystic symphonies.

But we have left those gentle haunts to pass

With weary feet to the new Calvary,

Where we behold, as one who in a glass

Sees his own face, self-slain Humanity,

And in the dumb reproach of that sad gaze

Learn what an awful phantom the red hand of man can raise.

O smitten mouth! O forehead crowned with thorn!

O chalice of all common miseries!

Thou for our sakes that loved thee not hast borne
An agony of endless centuries,

And we were vain and ignorant nor knew

That when we stabbed thy heart it was our own real hearts we slew.

Being ourselves the sowers and the seeds,

The night that covers and the lights that fade,
The spear that pierces and the side that bleeds,

The lips betraying and the life betrayed;
The deep hath calm: the moon hath rest: but we
Lords of the natural world are yet our own dread
enemy.

Is this the end of all that primal force

Which, in its changes being still the same,

From eyeless Chaos cleft its upward course,

Through ravenous seas and whirling rocks and

flame,

Till the suns met in heaven and began

Their cycles, and the morning stars sang, and the

Word was Man!

Nay, nay, we are but crucified, and though

The bloody sweat falls from our brows like rain

Loosen the nails—we shall come down I know,

Staunch the red wounds—we shall be whole

again,

No need have we of hyssop-laden rod,

That which is purely human, that is godlike, that
is God.

LOUIS NAPOLEON

EAGLE of Austerlitz! where were thy wings
When far away upon a barbarous strand,
In fight unequal, by an obscure hand,
Fell the last scion of thy brood of Kings!

Poor boy! thou shalt not flaunt thy cloak of red,
Or ride in state through Paris in the van
Of thy returning legions, but instead
Thy mother France, free and republican,

Shall on thy dead and crownless forehead place

The better laurels of a soldier's crown,

That not dishonoured should thy soul go down

To tell the mighty Sire of thy race

That France hath kissed the mouth of Liberty,
And found it sweeter than his honied bees,
And that the giant wave Democracy
Breaks on the shores where Kings lay couched at
ease.

ENDYMION

(FOR MUSIC)

THE apple trees are hung with gold,
And birds are loud in Arcady,
The sheep lie bleating in the fold,
The wild goat runs across the wold,
But yesterday his love he told,
I know he will come back to me.
O rising moon! O Lady moon!
Be you my lover's sentinel,
You cannot choose but know him well,
For he is shod with purple shoon,
You cannot choose but know my love,
For he a shepherd's crook doth bear,
And he is soft as any dove,
And brown and curly is his hair,

The turtle now has ceased to call

Upon her crimson-footed groom,
The grey wolf prowls about the stall,
The lily stinging seneschal
Sleeps in the lily-bell, and all
The violet hills are lost in gloom.
O risen moon! O holy moon!
Stand on the top of Helice,
And if my own true love you see,
Ah! if you see the purple shoon,
The hazel crook, the lad's brown hair,
The goat-skin wrapped about his arm,
Tell him that I am waiting where
The rushlight glimmers in the Farm.

The falling dew is cold and chill, And no bird sings in Arcady, The little fauns have left the hill,

Even the tired daffodil

Has closed its gilded doors, and still

My lover comes not back to me.

False moon! False moon! O waning moon!

Where is my own true lover gone,

Where are the lips vermilion,

The shepherd's crook, the purple shoon?

Why spread that silver pavilion,

Why wear that veil of drifting mist?

Ah! thou hast young Endymion

Thou hast the lips that should be kissed!

LE JARDIN

THE lily's withered chalice falls
Around its rod of dusty gold,
And from the beech-trees on the wold
The last wood-pigeon coos and calls.

The gaudy leonine sunflower

Hangs black and barren on its stalk,

And down the windy garden walk

The dead leaves scatter,—hour by hour.

Pale privet-petals white as milk

Are blown into a snowy mass:

The roses lie upon the grass

Like little shreds of crimson silk.

LA MER

A WHITE mist drifts across the shrouds,

A wild moon in this wintry sky

Gleams like an angry lion's eye

Out of a mane of tawny clouds.

The muffled steersman at the wheel

Is but a shadow in the gloom;—

And in the throbbing engine-room

Leap the long rods of polished steel.

The shattered storm has left its trace
Upon this huge and heaving dome,
For the thin threads of yellow foam
Float on the waves like ravelled lace.

LE PANNEAU

UNDER, the rose-tree's dancing shade
There stands a little ivory girl,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl
With pale green nails of polished jade.

The red leaves fall upon the mould,

The white leaves flutter, one by one,

Down to a blue bowl where the sun,

Like a great dragon, writhes in gold.

The white leaves float upon the air,

The red leaves flutter idly down,

Some fall upon her yellow gown,

And some upon her raven hair.

She takes an amber lute and sings,
And as she sings a silver crane
Begins his scarlet neck to strain,
And flap his burnished metal wings.

She takes a lute of amber bright,
And from the thicket where he lies
Her lover, with his almond eyes,
Watches her movements in delight.

And now she gives a cry of fear,
And tiny tears begin to start:
A thorn has wounded with its dart.
The pink-veined sea-shell of her ear.

And now she laughs a merry note:

There has fallen a petal of the rose
Just where the yellow satin shows
The blue-veined flower of her throat.

With pale green nails of polished jade,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl,
There stands a little ivory girl
Under the rose-tree's dancing shade.

LES BALLONS

AGAINST these turbid turquoise skies
The light and luminous balloons
Dip and drift like satin moons,
Drift like silken butterflies;

Reel with every windy gust,
Rise and reel like dancing girls,
Float like strange transparent pearls,
Fall and float like silver dust.

Now to the low leaves they cling, Each with coy fantastic pose, Each a petal of a rose Straining at a gossamer string. Then to the tall trees they climb, Like thin globes of amethyst, Wandering opals keeping tryst With the rubies of the lime.

CANZONET

I HAVE no store
Of gryphon-guarded gold;
Now, as before,
Bare is the shepherd's fold.
Rubies nor pearls
Have I to gem thy throat;
Yet woodland girls
Have loved the shepherd's note.

Then pluck a reed

And bid me sing to thee,

For I would feed

Thine ears with melody,

Who art more fair

Than fairest fleur-de-lys,

More sweet and rare
Than sweetest ambergris.

What dost thou fear?
Young Hyacinth is slain,
Pan is not here,
And will not come again.
No horned Faun
Treads down the yellow leas,
No God at dawn
Steals through the olive trees.

Hylas is dead,

Nor will he e'er divine

Those little red

Rose-petalled lips of thine.

On the high hill

No ivory dryads play,

Silver and still

Sinks the sad autumn day.

LE JARDIN DES TUILERIES

THIS winter air is keen and cold,
And keen and cold this winter sun,
But round my chair the children run
Like little things of dancing gold.

Sometimes about the painted kiosk

The mimic soldiers strut and stride,

Sometimes the blue-eyed brigands hide
In the bleak tangles of the bosk.

And sometimes, while the old nurse cons
Her book, they steal across the square,
And launch their paper navies where
Huge Triton writhes in greenish bronze.

And now in mimic flight they flee,
And now they rush, a boisterous bandAnd, tiny hand on tiny hand,
Climb up the black and leafless tree.

Ah! cruel tree! if I were you,

And children climbed me, for their sake

Though it be winter I would break

Into spring blossoms white and blue!

PAN

DOUBLE VILLANELLE

1

O GOAT-FOOT God of Arcady!

This modern world is grey and old,
And what remains to us of thee?

No more the shepherd lads in glee Throw apples at thy wattled fold, O goat-foot God of Arcady!

Nor through the laurels can one see

Thy soft brown limbs, thy beard of gold,

And what remains to us of thee?

And dull and dead our Thames would be, For here the winds are chill and cold, O goat-foot God of Arcady!

Then keep the tomb of Helice,
Thine olive-woods, thy vine-clad wold,
And what remains to us of thee?

Though many an unsung elegy Sleeps in the reeds our rivers hold, O goat-foot God of Arcady! Ah, what remains to us of thee? n

AH, leave the hills of Arcady,
Thy satyrs and their wanton play,
This modern world hath need of thee.

No nymph or Faun indeed have we, For Faun and nymph are old and grey, Ah, leave the hills of Arcady!

This is the land where liberty
Lit grave-browed Milton on his way,
This modern world hath need of thee!

A land of ancient chivalry Where gentle Sidney saw the day, Ah, leave the hills of Arcady! This fierce sea-lion of the sea,

This England lacks some stronger lay,

This modern world hath need of thee!

Then blow some trumpet loud and free, And give thine oaten pipe away, Ah, leave the hills of Arcady! This modern world hath need of thee!

IN THE FOREST

OUT of the mid-wood's twilight
Into the meadow's dawn,
Ivory limbed and brown-eyed,
Flashes my Faun!

He skips through the copses singing,
And his shadow dances along,
And I know not which I should follow,
Shadow or song!

O Hunter, snare me his shadow!
O Nightingale, catch me his strain!
Else moonstruck with music and madness
I track him in vain!

SYMPHONY IN YELLOW

A^N omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly
And, here and there, a passer-by
Shows like a little restless midge.

Big barges full of yellow hay

Are moored against the shadowy wharf,

And, like a yellow silken scarf,

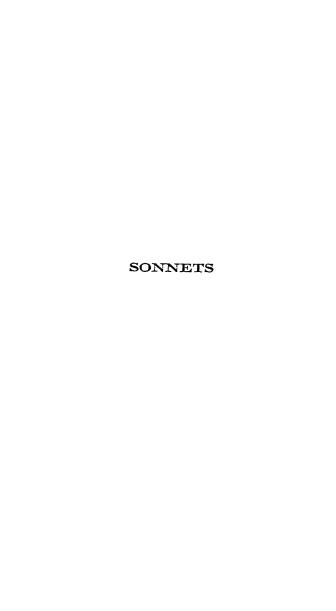
The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade

And flutter from the Temple elms,

And at my feet the pale green Thames

Lies like a rod of rippled jade.



HÉLAS!

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

TO MILTON

MILTON! I think thy spirit hath passed away

From these white cliffs and high-embattled towers;
This gorgeous fiery-coloured world of ours
Seems fallen into ashes dull and grey,
And the age changed unto a mimic play
Wherein we waste our else too-crowded hours:
For all our pomp and pageantry and powers
We are but fit to delve the common clay,
Seeing this little isle on which we stand,
This England, this sea-lion of the sea,
By ignorant demagogues is held in fee,
Who love her not: Dear God! is this the land
Which bare a triple empire in her hand
When Cromwell spake the word Democracy!

CHRISTIANS IN BULGARIA 141

ON THE MASSACRE OF THE CHRISTIANS IN BULGARIA

CHRIST, dost Thou live indeed? or are Thy bones

Still straitened in their rock-hewn sepulchre?
And was Thy Rising only dreamed by her
Whose love of Thee for all her sin atones?
For here the air is horrid with men's groans,
The priests who call upon Thy name are slain,
Dost Thou not hear the bitter wail of pain
From those whose children lie upon the stones?
Come down, O Son of God! incestuous gloom
Curtains the land, and through the starless night
Over Thy Cross a Crescent moon I see!
If Thou in very truth didst burst the tomb
Come down, O Son of Man! and show Thy might
Lest Mahomet be crowned instead of Thee!

HOLY WEEK AT GENOA

WANDERED through Scoglietto's far retreat.

The oranges on each o'erhanging spray Burned as bright lamps of gold to shame the day;

Some startled bird with fluttering wings and fleet Made snow of all the blossoms; at my feet

Like silver moons the pale narcissi lay:

And the curved waves that streaked the great green bay

Laughed i' the sun, and life seemed very sweet. Outside the young boy-priest passed singing clear, ' Jesus the son of Mary has been slain,

O come and fill His sepulchre with flowers.'

Ah, God! Ah, God! those dear Hellenic hours Had drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain, The Cross, the Crown, the Soldiers and the Spear.

URBS SACRA ÆTERNA

ROME! what a scroll of History thine has been;

In the first days thy sword republican
Ruled the whole world for many an age's span:
Then of the peoples wert thou royal Queen,
Till in thy streets the bearded Goth was seen;
And now upon thy walls the breezes fan
(Ah, city crowned by God, discrowned by man!)
The hated flag of red and white and green.
When was thy glory! when in search for power
Thine eagles flew to greet the double sun,
And the wild nations shuddered at thy rod?
Nay, but thy glory tarried for this hour,
When pilgrims kneel before the Holy One,
The prisoned shepherd of the Church of God.
Monte Mario

E TENEBRIS

COME down, O Christ, and help me! reach Thy hand,

For I am drowning in a stormier sea
Than Simon on Thy lake of Galilee:
The wine of life is spilt upon the sand,
My heart is as some famine-murdered land
Whence all good things have perished utterly,
And well I know my soul in Hell must lie
If I this night before God's throne should stand.
'He sleeps perchance, or rideth to the chase,

Like Baal, when his prophets howled that name From morn to noon on Carmel's smitten height.'

Nay, peace, I shall behold, before the night,

The feet of brass, the robe more white than flame.

The wounded hands, the weary human face.

AT VERONA

HOW steep the stairs within King's houses

For exile-wearied feet as mine to tread,
And O how salt and bitter is the bread
Which falls from this Hound's table,—better far
That I had died in the red ways of war,
Or that the gate of Florence bare my head,
Than to live thus, by all things comraded
Which seek the essence of my soul to mar.

'Curse God and die: what better hope than this?

He hath forgotten thee in all the bliss

Of his gold city, and eternal day'—

Nay peace: behind my prison's blinded bars

I do possess what none can take away,

My love and all the glory of the stars.

ON THE SALE BY AUCTION OF KEATS' LOVE LETTERS

THESE are the letters which Endymion wrote

To one he loved in secret, and apart.

And now the brawlers of the auction mart

Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,

Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote

The merchant's price. I think they love not art

Who break the crystal of a poet's heart

That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat.

Is it not said that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe?

THE NEW REMORSE

THE sin was mine; I did not understand.

So now is music prisoned in her cave,
Save where some ebbing desultory wave
Frets with its restless whirls this meagre strand.

And in the withered hollow of this land
Hath Summer dug herself so deep a grave,
That hardly can the leaden willow crave
One silver blossom from keen Winter's hand.

But who is this who cometh by the shore?
(Nay, love, look up and wonder!) Who is this
Who cometh in dyed garments from the South'
It is thy new-found Lord, and he shall kiss
The yet unravished roses of thy mouth,
And I shall weep and worship, as before.

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